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Head of the Literary Department of A. Khanzhonkov's Film Studio Maria Kallash-Garris and the Moscow Art Theatre

ABSTRACT

The article examines the career of journalist and literary critic Maria Kallash-Garris (1886–1955) as a screenwriter and head of the Literary Department at the “A. Khanzhonkov and Co” film company in 1913–14. The key point in her collaboration with filmmakers is the mediation between Khanzhonkov’s studio and the artists of the Moscow Art Theatre. After an unsuccessful attempt to secure Olga Knipper-Chekhova’s agreement to appear on screen in 1913, the following year Kallash managed to organize the making of a newsreel with the participation of Moscow Art Theatre actors at several estates, associated with the life of Aleksandr Pushkin. The resulting film was not released, but the role of Kallash in its creation, as well as her participation in such 1913 screen adaptations by Khanzhonkov’s studio as *The Precipice* (“Obryv”) by Ivan Goncharov, allows Kallash to be included not only among the first Russians women screenwriters, but also among the first Russian female film directors, along with Elizaveta Thiemann, Olga Preobrazhenskaya and Olga Rakhmanova. The article extensively quotes from the correspondence between Kallash and Knipper-Chekhova, which makes it possible to illuminate in detail the work of Kallash in early Russian film industry and brings new information about Aleksandr Khanzhonkov’s film company and its owners to the attention of film scholars.

KEYWORDS

Maria Kallash-Garris, Petr Chardynin, Aleksandr Khanzhonkov, Moscow Art Theatre, Olga Knipper-Chekhova, early Russian cinema, women in Russian cinema.

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматривается карьера журналистки и литературного критика Марии Каллаш-Гаррис (1886–1955) в качестве сценаристки и заведующей литературным отделом акционерного общества «А. Ханжонков и Ко» в 1913–1914 гг. Ключевым моментом в ее сотрудничестве с кинематографистами становится посредничество между студией А. Ханжонкова и артистами Московского Художественного театра. После неудачной попытки привлечь в кинематограф Ольгу Книппер-Чехову в 1913 г. в 1914 г. М. Каллаш удается организовать съемки хроникальной ленты с участием актеров МХТ в пушкинских местах. Созданный в результате фильм не вышел на экраны, но роль М. Каллаш в его создании, а также ее участие в экранизации картины студии Ханжонкова 1913 г. «Обрыв» по И. Гончарову позволяет ввести М. Каллаш в число не только первых русских сценаристок, но и первых русских женщин-кинорежиссеров, наряду с Елизаветой Тиман, Ольгой Преображенской и Ольгой Рахмановой. В статье цитируется переписка М. Каллаш с О. Книппер-Чеховой, которая позволяет подробно осветить работу Каллаш в раннем русском кинематографе и вводит в киноведческий оборот новые сведения о кинофабрике А. Ханжонкова и ее руководителях.

КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА

Мария Каллаш-Гаррис, Пётр Чардынин, Александр Ханжонков, МХТ, Ольга Книппер-Чехова, раннее русское кино, женщины в русском кино.

1. THE OPEN LETTER. 1915

In November 1915, the largest Russian film company A. Khanzhonkov & Co began publishing a new “art magazine” named after the company’s logo: *Pegas* (*Pegasus*). In its second, December issue, after the company’s scripts, film reviews, and coverage of the theatres, it printed an open letter from one of the directors of the company, Petr Chardynin, addressed to “*Novoe Vremia*’s employee Mr Kurdiumov”.

After an epigraph in verse, Chardynin immediately addresses the letter’s intended recipient: “I regret that your feuilleton, placed in No. 14205 of *Novoe Vremia* (*The New Times*), dated September 26th, has only now got into my hands. In this feuilleton, you have pounced upon the cinema. To be fair, in your article you have devoted only a few lines to the cinema in general; it is almost entirely directed against one company, to which for some reason you took a special dislike.

Since I have been working in cinema for a long time and know more or less all Russian companies, naturally, it was not difficult for me to guess against whom your article was directed.

I do not know what drove you, boldness (to say the least) or something else, when you, without hesitation, knowingly manipulated the facts in your favour, giving them deliberately incorrect coverage.

You express righteous indignation at the fact that filmmakers dared to petition for the reversion of the decision to requisition electrical theatres. You find the motives behind this petition worthy of attention, ‘because Messrs. filmmakers, taking care of the equipment of the hospitals, point out that the cinematographic premises are devoid of kitchens and are generally not convenient for the accommodation of the wounded.’

You just forgot to mention that the commission that examined the premises of the cinema theatres had itself admitted that at least three-quarters of them were completely unsuitable for hospitals and that they could be requisitioned only if absolutely necessary. And such necessity, thank God, obviously does not yet exist, and if there were such necessity, no petitions would have probably helped.

Finally, you did not mention that the ‘filmmakers’ in their petition had proposed to equip at their own expense premises corresponding and more appropriate to the needs of hospitals and, therefore, had not shied away from fulfilling their civic duty. As you can see, you missed something in the motives you indicated.

Further, you direct your rage entirely at the above-mentioned ‘joint-stock company.’

Probably because in all of Moscow only one theatre had been occupied by the wounded for two weeks and was vacated when the need for it had passed, and this theatre belongs to a ‘joint-stock company.’

But I dare to assure Mr Kurdiumov that the company did not submit any petitions either to the 'higher' or to the 'lower' spheres, just as no one heard any 'cries for help' of the perishing income-producing enterprise.

These are the facts.

But this is not the most important thing. I repeat, the distortion of the facts could have been explained by the inaccuracy of the information you collected, and this, at least to a certain extent, could serve as your excuse.

Then, however, the question remains about the source from whence you got your information.

Ethics should always come first. I will try to be as delicate and keep your incognito, just as you kept the incognito of "a certain joint-stock company.'

Unfortunately, I will have to start from afar, but the story is so instructive that it deserves that we take this excursion into the past.

It was about three years ago. A certain lady appeared at the office of 'a certain joint-stock company' – an energetic, manly lady, with a heavy gait, with a voice that would be the envy of any sergeant-major, and (probably to make the style complete) with her hair cropped short. She introduced herself as an employee of the newspaper *Utro Rossii* (*The Morning of Russia*).

She brought a script. You, Mr Kurdiumov, are talking about creating a new cinema, 'without detectives, suicides, apaches and courtesans.' And we thought so and think so. That is why we were always happy when we were able to attract like-minded employees. So we were also happy, Mr Kurdiumov, to welcome this employee from a respected newspaper. But can you imagine: for her first debut, this lady writer brought a script choke-full of those trappings at which you, Mr Kurdiumov, repine in your article. There were courtesans, and houses of assignation, and the morals of privet parlours, and other attributes of vulgar tear-jerking dramas. To top it all off, the script turned out to be a copy of a foreign screen play that had at some point been banned by the censorship. As gently as possible (after all, it was a lady, Mr Kurdiumov), I declared that the screen play would not suit. And what do you think – this manly author responded that this was a dramatization of a certain scandalous episode that had taken place in Petrograd, and even mentioned the real names of the characters. Here you are attacking filmmakers, but you should have at least mentioned authors as well...

Having visited the office of the joint-stock company several times, this lady decided that she knew cinema business perfectly, and since the 'joint-stock company,' which you treated so severely, published a cinema magazine, she immediately offered her collaboration. During this period, a number of articles by this author appeared in the magazine, ardent and vocal articles, of course, all in defence of cinema.

What we considered to be sincere and based on convictions turned out to be mere hype, because the 'convictions' of this venerable author changed with amazing

swiftness, since in a short time they changed several ‘fronts,’ moving successively from *Russkie vedomosti* (*The Russian Gazette*) to *Utro Rossii*, then to *Golos Moskvyy* (*The Voice of Moscow*), then to *Večernee vremia* (*The Evening Times*) and, finally, to *Novoe vremia*. As you can see, the range is wide, since each of the listed bodies has its own line, and in each of them, of course, one needs to be a ‘convinced’ employee.

Of course, they were an equally ‘convinced’ employee in the cinema magazine.

And now, after ardent and vocal articles in defence of cinema and its great educational value, it is somewhat embarrassing to read that ‘the educational role of cinema is the vulgar and obscene anecdote that one is ashamed to tell and listen to.’ And what a strange coincidence: this abrupt change of convictions had taken place as soon as the author had gotten some personal bones to pick with the editors of the cinema magazine.

To finish cinema off, you, Mr Kurdiunov, write that it ‘spoils the taste with gross distortions of the masterpieces of classical literature,’ but the author of whom I am talking repeatedly in their articles, so full of conviction, advances the idea that the direct and great task of cinema is to popularize our classical writers, to make them accessible to the masses who visit electric theatres, that this is its purpose, its purpose, etc., etc., and so they zealously set about rehashing our classical writers. So they rehashed Goncharov’s *The Precipice*, Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, Turgenyev’s *First Love*, Sienkiewicz’s *The Deluge* and many other masterpieces of classical literature, which by the way were not filmed after all, since the rehashing proved to be so incompetent that even we, ‘the film people,’ did not have the heart to perform such a distortion.

But the situation was even worse with this author’s original screen plays. At various points, they sold to the ‘ceratin joint-stock company’ that you mentioned several scenarios, which were passed off as original, and which turned out to be simply alterations of other people’s works. So, for example, their ‘*Shadows of Sin*’ was an adaptation of Amfiteatrov’s novel *Poisoned Conscience*; ‘*Autumn Leaves*’ was a reworking of a story that had been published, I think, in the journal *Russkoe bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*); ‘*Rosemary Flower*’ was a reworking of the play *Grandmother* (which has been shown by Nezlobin’s); ‘*Romance*’ was from the story ‘*Braga’s Serenade*’ published either in the *Zhurnal dlia domokhoziaek* (*Magazine for Housewives*) or in *Zhenskoe delo* (*Women’s Cause*). As you can see, the sources are diverse. How could one keep track of all of them? So it should not be surprising that sometimes these ‘film people’ put their foot in it – they put on a screen play, and it turns out to be stolen... They, of course, are called ‘marauders’, but what tends to be forgotten is that it is the authors who bring the scripts to us, pass them off as original ones, and get money for them as such. This, at least, was the case with that ‘publicist.’

When it became known that these works, to put it delicately, were ‘borrowed’, we had to throw them away, but the author had already received money for them. So, Mr Kurdiunov, you exclaim pathetically: ‘What a tarnish against

the background of general labour efforts are these actions of the Moscow film people! ... And what would you call the action I cited above? – Just curious.

And now one more last thing.

You may ask why, in addressing you, I devote so much space to some ‘anonymous author’ who apparently has no connection with you?

With the recurrence of literary transformations, the transformation of Mrs X. into Mr Kurdiumov is also possible.

I would be very glad if you, Mr Kurdiumov, could prove to me that I am mistaken in judging the nature of the connection that exists between your ‘knowledge’ in the affairs of cinema and a former employee of ‘a certain joint-stock company.’ Otherwise, I will be forced to call both persons and things by their real names.

P. Chardynin” [1, p. 100–104].

Petr Chardynin, an actor and director, who by the time of writing this open letter had been working in cinema for almost ten years, since the very inception of Russian film production, and who knew everyone and everything, was sufficiently outraged by the article in *Novoe Vremia* to not only hint quite transparently at some personal scores between M. Kurdiumov and the company of Aleksandr Khanzhonkov (where Chardynin himself had worked since 1908) but to stoop to disclosing Kurdiumov’s pseudonym.

Indeed, the journalist Maria Kallash published under this name in various periodicals. She also wrote, among others, under the pseudonym Garris and has therefore been known as Kallash-Garris. Interestingly, in his tendentious account of Kallash’s cooperation with Khanzhonkov’s company, Chardynin misses several key points. And the first of them is that Kallash was not only one of the first Russian screenwriters to adapt Russian classical literature for the screen, but also the head of the literary department at Khanzhonkov’s film studio (the first such department in the country) – and, it seems, one of the first such heads at Russian studios in general.

In fact, this omission is characteristic not only of Chardynin’s account. For example, the memoirs of the cameraman Louis Forestier (who worked for Khanzhonkov since 1910), published in 1945, mention Aleksandr Khanzhonkov’s attempt, also known from other sources, to attract famous writers to produce scenarios for the company after the release in early 1912 of the “blockbuster” *Oborona Sevastopolia* (*The Defense of Sebastopol*): “This unsuccessful attempt [of cooperation with writers] prompted Khanzhonkov to think about the need to create something like a scenario department at the studio. This department was headed first by the writer Tavrchanin, and later by N. V. Turkin” [2, p. 53]. The journalistic, critical, and screenwriting work of Nikandr Turkin (who died in 1919) is relatively well known; practically nothing is known about the cinema work of Tavrchanin (Petr Manych or Manych-Tavrchanin, who died in 1918). The name of Maria Kallash-Garris, who emigrated to France after the revolution, has been

dropped out of this list. In the version of the memoirs of the owner of the film company, Aleksandr Khanzhonkov, published in 1937, this name is also not mentioned, neither in connection with the scenarios nor in connection with the Literary Department. In a more complete draft version M. A. Kallash is mentioned as the head of the Literary Department, but Veniamin Vishnevskii, who edited the manuscript and wrote the commentary for it, not only completely rejected her contribution, but also thought her a man (making Chardynin's unsavoury joke a reality): "...Manych-Tavrichanin, a completely unknown writer, was soon replaced by M. A. Kallash-Garris, but he also did not display any special activity" [3, p. 373]. One of the first Russian historians of cinema, Boris Likhachev, who published the first part of his extensive research on the early years of the development of cinema in the country in 1927, mentions the name of M. Kallash-Garris only as the author of the film adaptation of *The Precipice* (1913) [4, p. 101].

The disclosure of the male pseudonym of a woman writer back in the 19th century had been considered something ignoble, even indecent. Chardynin's anger and his act of revenge are clearly disproportionate to the occasion which prompted his rebuff to Kurdiunov/Maria Kallash (temporary requisitions of cinema theatres for hospitals and an appeal by film producers to cancel the requisition order). He was offended by her attitude to the cause, in which he had been involved for almost a decade by the end of 1915, while she, in his account, had only briefly, like a typical journalist (or typical hack) dropped in at the film factory and then used her newfound knowledge to accuse her former colleagues and employers of not honouring their civic duty towards the Russian soldiers. In Chardynin's retelling, Kallash acts as a plagiarist who does not even like cinema and uses "insider" information about the work of the largest Russian film studio in order to throw a stone at those who had previously turned a blind eye to her script "plagiarism."

Ironically, the accusations that Chardynin levels against Maria Kallash add up to almost the only detailed description of her film work. And yet this description has something to dispute, something to clarify, and something to add, despite the fact that the archive of Kallash herself, who died in Paris in 1955, is apparently lost, and her numerous articles in Russian pre-revolutionary press have not yet been collected and analyzed. Scattered information from the film journals of that time and Kallash's correspondence paint a slightly different picture – that of a person who was sincerely interested in cinema, actively rushed to its defence on the pages of newspapers and was energetically engaged in transforming it from a down-market "cabaret" (one of her favourite invectives) into art. Leaving aside, for lack of space, the question of Maria Kallash's script work at Khanzhonkov's company, which constitutes an important aspect of Chardynin's open letter, as well as the role and significance of "plagiarism" in the 1910s scriptwriting in general, in this article I would like to dwell on one important aspect of her involvement with filmmaking, which Chardynin also does not mention.

This aspect is the active participation of Maria Kallash in the attempt of the Khanzhonkov company to attract the troupe of the Moscow Art Theatre to the screen. Materials about this also shed light on the circumstances of Kallash's work at Khanzhonkov's, which correct Chardynin's version and complement the history of the relationship between early Russian filmmakers and the artistes and the leadership of the Moscow Art Theatre. Documents about Kallash's involvement with this, although they have been published in the last few years in volumes on bibliography and Pushkin studies, have not yet been used in works on the history of cinema.

2. KHANZHONKOV'S FILM STUDIO AND THE MOSCOW ART THEATRE. 1910–1912

In his monograph *The Paths of Soviet Cinema and the Moscow Art Theatre*, published in 1947, Moisei Aleinikov, who had begun working as a film journalist and film critic in 1907 and had become the de facto director of M. Trofimov's film studio Rus' in 1915, talks about the mutual interest of the most progressive Russian theatre and the cinema industry developing starting around 1914 when Boris Sushkevich directed the first of his four films in Russia, *Tsvety zapozdalye* (*Belated Flowers*) (with the participation of actors from the Moscow Art Theatre) [5, p. 185]. At the same time, in 1914, Stanislavsky himself several times spoke out publicly on the fashionable theme of the confrontation between theatre and cinema. Aleinikov also recalls his conversations with Stanislavsky about cinema in 1915–16. The project of a film company, which arose within the circle of Maxim Gorky and the actress of the Moscow Art Theatre Maria Andreeva was also born around 1915–16.

However, the attempts of Khanzhonkov's studio to attract the Moscow Art Theatre actors to the cinema began earlier, and M. Kallash played a key role in this. The materials related to this shed light on her film work and provide new information about the work of the Khanzhonkov studio as a whole and about its perception by representatives of the “old arts.”

In his memoirs, Khanzhonkov dates the purely “private” interest of the Moscow Art Theatre in cinema to 1910.

“In the spring of 1910, one of the newsreels, which was not even shown in theatres anywhere, caused a lot of conversation in society and also left a mark in the press.

The Art Theatre people, who were especially hostile to the cinema, were filmed, – this event was considered very flattering for Russian cinema.

When I got word from the Art Theatre about the desire of the management to film its troupe and employees, not for commercial purposes, I willingly responded to this and immediately went, together with [cameraman] Siverson, to choose a location for the shooting and organize it.

The next morning, in the courtyard of the Art Theatre, all the artistes and employees, more than three hundred of them in total, marched past our camera, and a day later only actors, 50 or 60 people, gathered in our studio...

In order for the film not to resemble “photography in cinema,” I proposed to perform a scene of the following content: Nemirovich-Danchenko, surrounded by the actors, reads one of his works to them, and when the reading evokes applause from the audience, Stanislavsky enters and congratulates the author on his success...

There is no need to say that this scene was played without rehearsal and was great. The next day, all those participating in it, including Knipper, Kachalov, Moskvina, Vishnevskii, Koreneva and others, gathered in the screening room at our office and, having watched the positive copy on the screen several times, were very pleased with what they saw.

Thus, the troupe and staff of the Moscow Art Theatre were immortalized on film. This picture did not go on the market, our company only kept one positive copy for itself and presented the other, together with the negative, to the theatre” [6, p. 40].

The magazine *Sine-Fono* (*Cine-Phono*) wrote in their issue of March 15, 1910: “... an interesting step was taken by the Moscow Art Theatre, which expressed a desire to acquaint the general public with the behind-the-scenes side of its life with the help of cinematography. The entire procedure for staging a new play has been filmed, from the reading of a play by Nemirovich-Danchenko up to rehearsals” [7, p. 6]. Filmographer Veniamin Vishnevskii includes this picture in his catalogue of pre-revolutionary documentary films under the title *One Day at the Moscow Art Theatre*: “Filming (February?) by V. F. Siverson of staged episodes from the creative life and production of the Moscow Art Theatre; among those filmed are K. S. Stanislavsky, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, O. L. Knipper-Chekhova, V. I. Kachalov, I. M. Moskvina, A. L. Vishnevskii and others.” Vishnevskii also adds the note: “Was screened at the actors’ party at the Moscow Art Theatre: April 1910” [8, p. 77–78]. This “promotional” film, however, did not lead to any cooperation and remained unknown to the viewers.

If in 1910 Khazhnikov probably did not even think about inviting the Moscow Art Theatre to participate in the creation of a real film, and not a newsreel vignette – he did not have the proper working conditions, and the public did not have a habit of watching serious enough and long enough plots, – then two years later he is concerned with the development of his film production and, first of all, of fiction films, for the making of which a professional studio is required: “On Zhitnaia Street, I bought a plot of land with little old houses, which could only be regarded as building material.

I moved the studio from Krylatskoe to this site so that from then on I could work all year round.

The construction work, begun in early spring, was carried out at an accelerated pace and by June 1912 had already been completed” [6, p. 59]. Technical modernization was followed by the attention to literary material to film. In the second half of 1912, “In an effort to improve the quality of their films, my competitors began to take care of attracting writers to the cinema. The Pathé Frères company signed agreements on writing scripts with the following writers: Anatolii Kamenskii, Artsybashev, Arkhipov, Solomenskii, and Iushkevich.

I did not lag behind my French rival and immediately signed contracts with Averchenko, Dymov, Fedor Sologub, Teffi, Tsenzor, Amfitheatrov, Chirikov, Kuprin, Manych-Tavrichanin, Leonid Andreev <...> The scripts were written by only a few writers, the rest limited their activity to giving permission for staging their literary works for the screen <...> Nevertheless, the connection with the writers brought us great benefits. We set up a special department at the studio to specifically deal with screenwriting. This was the first Literary Department in the Russian cinema industry. At first, its head was the writer Manych-Tavrichanin” [6, p. 64–65]. This, according to Khanzhonkov, took place in the fall of 1912.

“In the winter of 1912, when relations with writers began to somehow cool down, I <...> organized a big hunt in the vicinity of St. Petersburg.

Almost all writers who had signed agreements on scenarios with our joint-stock company took part in the hunt – and there were quite a few of them.

Despite the proper equipment of the hunters and all the experience of the local round-up specialists, the hunt was completely “bloodless”, which Arkadii Averchenko noted in his *Satyricon* journal, but the time was well spent, and the conversation after dinner about the achievements of Russian cinema with the help of literary men dragged on well after midnight...

Subsequent results of the hunt, however, were not brilliant. Original scenarios never materialized. I had to resort again and again to the dramatization of already existing works” [6, p. 65].

3. MARIA KALLASH APPEARS AT THE STUDIO. 1912 (?)

It is tempting to assume that Maria Kallash-Garris (a great lover of hunting) appeared at Khanzhonkov’s studio right after these events. However, there is further confusing evidence.

In the 1970s, shortly before her death, Khanzhonkov’s second wife Vera Popova-Khanzhonkova, inscribing people present in a series of photographs of the “celebrations of the Khanzhonkov Joint Stock Company” in honour of “the first studio



Photo 1. *Nemvrody*. Caricature by Re-mi. *Satirikon*. 1913. No. 7

(small stage) pictures at Zhitnaia 29” (that is, the first indoor filming in the new studio), dated them 1912 but did not further specify the date (the company was transformed into a joint-stock company in September 1912, and the “large stage” on Zhitnaia was completed by the end of 1914 [6, p. 84].

The photographs show, among others, the owners of the company, the spouses Aleksandr and Antonina Khanzhonkov, the animator Vladislav (Ladislav) Starevich (who recently joined the company), one of the oldest employees of the company, smiling Petr Chardynin, of course, – and a lady in a hat with a white feather and a cigarette either in her mouth or in her hand: “screenwriter and head of literary department Maria Aleksan [drovna] Kallash-Garris” (Khanzhonkova writes “Kalash-Garisson”) [9, l. 1 verso].

These are amateur “instant” photographs, taken, apparently, within a couple of minutes, and they capture fleeting poses, grimaces not smoothed out by the usual long exposure and blurred lines where the movement has gone beyond the boundaries of the field of focus.

It would seem that Vera Khanzhonkova, who became a film archivist after her husband’s death, should be trusted: after all, she, at the time a young editor Vera Popova, is also present in these photographs with a glass of wine in her hand.



Photo 2. Photo of the employees of the Joint Stock Company “A. Khanzhonkov and Co”, 1913 (?). From left to right: M. A. Kallash-Garris, A. N. Khanzhonkova, editor of the journal *Vestnik Kinematografii* G. Leonov (sitting), P. Chardynin (standing). RGALI. F. 987. Op. 2. Ed. kbr. 4. L. 2

In one of the photos, she is looking in the same direction as Maria Kallash, who is standing nearby. And Chardynin's calculation of November 1915 that Kallash-Garris appeared at the studio "three years ago" makes the fall of 1912 a likely moment of the beginning of this story.

And yet, articles with Garris's signature only began to be published in Khanzhonkov's journal *Vestnik kinematografii* only in June 1913; at the same time when news about the consecration of the new film studio appeared in the journal. Even if we assume that Kallash began to bring her scenarios to the studio in 1912 and became the head of the literary department half a year later, the dating of photographs from the Khanzhonkovs' archive would have to be shifted to 1913. Moreover, her own testimony of the beginning of this cooperation has been preserved, and it diverges significantly from Chardynin's version.

From *Vestnik kinematografii* alone it is clear that it was in the summer of 1913 that Kallash-Garris, with her customary energy, took up a new cause. The journal starts publishing reviews on unsolicited scenarios that have come to the studio, signed by "The Editorial Board of the Literary Department of A. Khanzhonkov & Co": "To Mr Stepanov (Revel). Without claiming to be a genius comedian, learn to write correctly.

To Mr F. Gomolinskii. Your plays, unfortunately, are too weak artistically and cannot be accepted" [10, p. 16]; "To Mr Ch. (Petersburg). Tell the 'writer who wants to remain anonymous' that if his works, like his name, remain a secret to us, we will not regret it overmuch. <...> To Mrs B. V-a (Tambov). Were you not sorry to kill off five of your heroes? The lack of talent, unfortunately, cannot be compensated for by shedding blood, and the critical instinct of the editorial board cannot be drowned out with revolver shots" [11, p. 28].

At this time, the magazine published reports about the company's work on film adaptations of *A Hero of Our Time*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Precipice* as well as about the organization of a special Russian Literary and Artistic Series of films or simply the Russian Art Series, in which all these screen adaptations were to be included in imitation of the recently (and successfully) launched the Russian Golden Series of the Thiemann and Reinhardt company. And it was at this moment (although it remained off the pages of *Vestnik kinematografii*) Khanzhonkov and Kallash-Garris made an attempt to approach the Moscow Art Theatre, or rather, its actors. Inviting theatre actors (just like inviting well-known writers) was at that time the main way to legitimize cinema as an art, to declare its rise above the "circus" and "fairground show-booth." This is exactly what Kallash publicly argued about in the summer of 1913 with the editorial of the journal *Teatr i iskusstvo* (Theatre and Art) ("Russian factories of cinematographic pictures have neither the technology, nor the taste, nor the capital of foreign establishments of this kind, and therefore their products are second-class goods" [12, p. 479]). In her open letter, for the first time, her position is announced publicly: "editor of the Literary Department of the Joint-Stock Company A. Khanzhonkov & Co M. Kallash-Garris":

“For some reason, arming himself against Russian cinematography in advance, the author, as an ‘informed’ person, takes the liberty of assuring [the readers] that ‘many companies have abandoned the idea of inviting famous actors and invite circus acrobats in their place.’ We consider it necessary, in the interests of truth, to note the following facts <...> As for the replacement of actors with acrobats and the qualities of ‘Moscow goods’, it will be instructive to inform readers that the best Russian firms are currently engaged not in fabricating ‘blood-filled dramas’, but in staging a number of works by Russian classical writers, and, for their films, use the services of such actors as: K. A. Varlamov, E. A. Roshchina-Insarova, V. L. Iureneva, V. V. Maksimov, I. I. Sud’binin, R. Adel’geim, E. V. Gel’tser and many others, whose names are far from being associated with either the circus or the show-booth” [13, p. 10–11].

4. CORRESPONDENCE WITH OLGA KNIPPER-CHEKHOVA. 1913

As we have seen, the content of the screenplays and the use of well-known actors went hand in hand at this time. And Maria Kallash was closely connected not only with the literary world but also with the theatrical world of Moscow, thanks in part to her husband, Vladimir Kallash, a literary and theatre historian. In 1914, *The History of the Russian Theatre* was published under the editorship of Kallash and N. E. Efros (however, the proposed three-volume edition was limited to only the first volume). Maria Kallash-Garris, an ardent admirer of the Moscow Art Theatre, was the most suitable member of Khanzhonkov’s circle, and even more so of the studio staff, for establishing contact with the theatre through one of its main actresses, Olga Knipper-Chekhova.

Her first letter from Knipper as an “intermediary” for the Khanzhonkovs is dated May 19, 1913 (although it was clearly not her first letter to “highly respected and dear” Olga Leonardovna) and presents a version of Kallash’s appearance at the cinema alternative to the one by Chardynin (in which the journalist first approached the Khanzhonkovs herself with a script): “Before presenting my request, I want to explain to you how I ended up in the role of an intermediary of A. A. Khanzhonkov’s film company.

In the spring of this year, A. A. Khanzhonkov (the managing director of the joint-stock company) invited me to take part in the adaptation of a number of works by our classical writers for the screen, that is, to take upon myself the choice of literary works and their adaptation. At first, I reacted very negatively to this proposal, since in my eyes cinema with its ‘spine-chilling and breathtaking dramas’ was a sheer embodiment of vulgarity – and, I confess, I was even somewhat surprised by the completely non-commercial enthusiasm with which A. A. Khanzhonkov, and especially his wife (a highly cultured, gifted, and artistically knowledgeable person) – treat their enterprise. But, looking closer, I was convinced that among the many filmmaking companies interested exclusively in profit, the Khanzhonkovs occupy a very special place and do their best

to ennoble this business and turn electric theatres into artistic and educational premises. Alongside thousands of foreign films depicting collapsing houses, fires, suicides, cheap boulevard melodramas à la *Fatal Love*, etc., etc., the Khanzhonkova are trying to introduce their own program, to attract a serious viewer, and to make the audience respect the screen. They have already organized an excellent Scientific Department of films; they are compiling a repertoire for children – Russian folk tales are being staged in their original form; old epics and legends are scheduled for staging – in a word, the entire Russian folk epic. These people treat their work with great love and they try persistently, with all their might, to be original. One of the immediate tasks is the screen adaptation of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Goncharov, Lermontov, Pushkin, and Gogol. With the help of cinema, they want to give artistic live illustrations to the best authors and thus to drag the audience away from Verbitskaia and Breshko-Breshkovskii, from various literary and cinematic ‘abomination’ into the field of serious creative endeavours.

Taking into account the colossal electric theatres attendance throughout Russia, one can imagine the significance that this kind of work will have. But here, of course, one is bound to meet very serious obstacles of the most varied nature. It seems to me that the main ones are the disregard of the ‘educated public’ for cinema (the public, which nevertheless, attends all kinds of ‘theatres of horror’) and then the habit of a Russian person to criticize everything and do nothing. The efforts of one group of people dissipate in the bottomless whirlpool of all sorts of unsavoury ‘deals,’ while the mercenary flock of reporters advertises what is being told to. And so one wishes that after all these efforts are not wasted and instead turn cinema from a fairground show-booth into something worthy of attention. The Khanzhonkova decided to open their own theatre in the fall of this year, to present a strictly defined program in it, and to conduct the whole business on a completely new basis, hoping that their example will influence the rest. One of the ‘stumbling blocks’ is the actors, or rather the lack of those; they want to preserve their artistic tradition.

All these endeavours will be realized much easier if one of the people from the world of genuine art takes the first step and, with their participation, makes the audience reckon with the screen.

The management of the Art Theatre seems to have given their consent to the participation of their actors in the performance of *Anatema* for the cinema. The Khanzhonkova asked me to persuade you to act for them. They ask only for your agreement in principle, and everything else – the conditions, the play which you chose – will depend solely on you. By the way, they offer, if you wish, to stage Turgenev’s story “A Lear of the Steppes” for you.

But these are only suggestions since the initiative will belong to you. This is what I am passing on to you, dear Olga Leonardovna, on behalf of the Khanzhonkova.

For my part, I want to tell you only that if hundreds of records are used to record musical and literary performances of our artistes, then to record your acting, every movement, every gesture of yours is necessary not only for the present but also for the future.

Such a huge mass of people have been dreamed of entering the Art Theatre for years and have not been able to do so! It is a shame to think that among the audience of season tickets there are people who one just wants to kick out of the theatre, but they are there because it is 'customary to see' every premiere, and also because they can have, without much effort, a box or a stalls chair. <...>

I want to believe that you will not refuse to understand me and that in this letter you will not see anything other than a sincere desire to ensure that the best actress is seen not only by a select few who are allowed entrance to the Holy of Holies of the Moscow Art Theatre, but also by many other people who have been dreaming about it for years. <...>

If for everything written here you perpetrate a verbal *pogrom* on me, I will not be offended, I just ask you to tell me everything that you think about my request. Your 'yes' or 'no' (I repeat, the question concerns only the agreement in principle) I will pass on to the Khanzhonkovs" [14, p. 219–223].

One of the arguments in favour of acting for the screen, which Kallash cites, is that the Moscow Art Theatre management already 'seems' to have approved the work of the theatre's actors on a film version of *Anatema*. Indeed, in 1913, with the consent of K. S. Stanislavsky L. A. Sullerzhitskii was going to adapt for the screen the famous production of 1909, and Vassily Kachalov was to repeat his leading role in the film version. This had just been announced in May by the most influential Russian film magazine *Sine-Fono* (and it was this news that probably prompted Khanzhonkov and Kallash to write the letter to Knipper-Chekhova). Former cameraman and director at the Moscow branch of the Pathé Frères company Kai Hansen, who had founded his own company, not only bought from Leonid Andreev the exclusive right to film the play but, in addition to inviting the Moscow Art Theatre actors, secured the consent of the theatre management, promising to comply with their requirements: "A guarantee of the artistic level of the production and the elegance of style" and submit 20% of the actors' fees to the Moscow Art Theatre pension fund [15, p. 23]. However, the filming was not allowed by the Holy Synod (the play had been banned for theatrical production at the beginning of 1910), and it was even reported that Kachalov completely refused to perform for the screen until *Anatema* received approval [5, p. 186].

Knipper's answer, apparently, was more evasive than the simple 'yes or no' that was expected of her, and in early June Kallash repeated the proposal, simultaneously reporting new information about the Khanzhonkovs' company and developing her point of view on the current state of the film industry, in which by this time she felt quite at home: "I want to tell you a lot, but one cannot fit everything in a letter. In particular, we need to talk about cinema for a long time in order to jointly work out mutual possibilities. I think, nevertheless, that you would be able, without exhausting yourself and without taking time from the theatre, to bring

a lot of valuable and interesting things into the cinema as well. The trouble is that in this business, technology appeared before art and a whole bunch of entrepreneurs seized the screen in their own hands, simply, to put it bluntly, defiled it, speculating on the base tastes of our public. A certain contingent of spectators with certain requirements attends electric theatres, and, meeting these requirements, our Moscow cinematographic firms buy *The Keys of Happiness* from Verbitskaia, and *Sanin* from Artsybashev; stage the adventures of the cornet Savin under the guidance of scribblers from yellow journalism rags.

If you could only see what types turn up at 'trial' screenings, how they praise or criticize 'promotional merchandise'! It is terrifying, because, unfortunately, these gentlemen almost unmistakably guess the tastes of the 'consumer' and respond to the aesthetic demands of the average man exactly as the average man needs it.

It is out of the question to dream of a gradual ennobling of the tastes of the Russian intelligentsia: it is enough to look at the reviews from libraries to be horrified and give up. Our audience will never demand anything on its own; at best, it will swallow what is given to it. And here it is necessary to apply the means without which, unfortunately, no undertaking can be successful – it is necessary that our vile 'press,' on which the whole world is based, starts talking seriously about cinema. Indeed, without the sanctions of newspapermen, our intelligentsia herd will not move anywhere, and if the newspapermen say that it is better to watch Turgenev than Verbitskaia on the screen, they will go to watch Turgenev – it will be 'accepted' and will go into effect, and with time it will get used to it and, perhaps, will figure out that Turgenev is better than Verbitskaia...

This is the only way to act: to force people to take the screen pictures seriously. Remember, dear Olga Leonardovna, what your theatre did in relation to the entire Russian stage, how it made even some fairground show-booth like Korsh's to raise its game (relatively, of course)...

It seems to me that cinema also needs to follow the same path: to make people talk about the repertoire, good performance, and good production.

The Khanzhonkovs have come exhausted looking for new ways. They have turned to all our modern 'famous' writers, distributed several tens of thousands [rubles] of advance payments to all of them, starting with Leonid Andreev, – and as a result, they received five or six hastily patched together vulgar boulevard plays with plots snatched from the criminal chronicles. Messrs. 'great people' reasoned very simply: cinema is a profitable revenue and, moreover, one with complete impunity, since there is no criticism. Our name is enough, they say, for everything to be accepted with gratitude.

I have looked through heaps of plays by our fiction writers of all ranks, read hundreds of their letters and, although I had long ceased to be surprised at the cynicism of modern writers, I was amazed – that was the limit! <...> Now we need to start again, and start from what we should have started with from the very first steps: to film our best actors.

In order to see these names, the audience will go to watch a different repertoire and will involuntarily begin to peer into all the details, looking on the screen for what it was made to feel in the theatre.

As for the process of rehearsals and filming itself, in cinema, it does not require as much time as in the theatre, even with the most careful production.

The choice of repertoire depends on you, of course. The program, which we are now starting, includes so far almost exclusively Russian classical writers. Since the number of scenes in each screen play is almost unlimited, many works lend themselves to cinematic staging without any distortion of the author. The titles on the screen are the exact text of the works.

True, before, in pursuit of names, some firms had already tried to stage Tolstoy, Lermontov, Pushkin... But God only knows what the author turned to when he was in the hands of a vulgar and ignorant scenario maker. Even Aleksandr Roslavlev, who imagines himself to be a great connoisseur of the Russian folk epic, made out of Russian epics something that left no nothing of the original either in the text or in the pictures...

However, if I begin to tell you the history of cinematic creative activities, I will never finish.

I myself am still not accustomed to many things, and I am constantly amazed, and the experts – masters of the screen – are amazed at my naivety and my too 'literary' attitude to the work, as they say.

Your departure to Essentuki greatly facilitates the matter. Khanzhonkov himself has gone there, and, if you will allow, he will see you and talk about everything. It would be good if he could be introduced to Konstantin Sergeevich [Stanislavsky]. Let me know your address in the Caucasus, and I will write to him whether he can see you.

Actually, the main head of the artistic side of the business is his wife. (I think I wrote to you about it.) Khanzhonkov himself, in many respects, wanders in the dark in what concerns the artistic domain, and this is not surprising – after all, from the Guards regiment he got straight into cinema and was brought up on it, but what is important and valuable in him is that he is an extremely sensitive and receptive person, not a swindler, although he is a businessman, and wants to do something not for his personal gain. He is a man of rare honesty and truthfulness, and for this, his competitors bully and nag him in every way. By the way, our well-known writers also used his credulity to rob him in every way.

He knows the technical side well, and as to the artistic one he is eager to pounce on any fresh thought. He has a natural flair. From a conversation with him, you will find out a lot in terms of the opportunity to take part in the cinema. By the way, he is going to stage and film *A Hero of Our Time*: landscape filming in the Caucasus, the rest in Moscow. I wrote the scenario myself in strict accordance with Lermontov, but I don't know what they will make out of it.

How I would like to see you and talk not only about cinema, of course... <...>

I am still in Moscow and have despaired of escaping... At the end of June, maybe I'll go to Tver province for a week to visit my family; in July I want to snatch two weeks for hunting – I would really want to live in the wild for a while, but I will not be able to travel far. I am going to Pskov and from there again for a few days to Mikhailovskoe and Trigorskoe – to the Pushkin places" [14, p. 223–28].

Hoping that Knipper-Chekhova would introduce Khanzhonkov to Stanislavsky, Kallash, apparently, did not know that they had already met on set in 1910 – or, perhaps, she meant the renewal of this acquaintance on a more solid level. Be that as it may, this new acquaintance did not take place again, and neither did Olga Knipper-Chekhova's participation in the feature films of the Khanzhonkov factory in the end. However, the mention of Pushkin's places at the very end of Kallash's letter was not accidental and led to the creation of another picture (with the participation of members of the Moscow Art Theatre troupe) after all.

5. PUSHKIN'S PLACES. 1913–1914

In the spring of 1913 (or in 1912) Kallash appeared to Chardynin as follows: "an energetic, manly lady, with a heavy gait, with a voice that would be the envy of any sergeant-major, and (probably to make the style complete) with her hair cropped short." In July 1913, a generally similar, but more sympathetic portrait of her was recorded in the diary of the writer V. V. Timofeeva (Pochinkovskaia) who lived at Mikhailovskoe: "...some young lady arrived, who seemed to look like a man (in her behaviour and manner of speech), introduced herself as a correspondent for the newspaper *Utro Rossii* and asked us to shelter her for one night. Not very tall, with cropped hair, with chestnut curls on her forehead, in a sports cap. The face is like a juicy apple, a blush all over her cheeks and bright, lively grey bulging eyes. The manners are either those of merchant folk or a seasoned tourist. But she turned out to be a caring housewife. She hunted for ducks somewhere in the Tomsk or Irkutsk provinces, she can sleep on the porch and the roof. "I slept even on a smokestack once." But her little tie was well-suited to the faded green of her suit and the hand were small, strong, and graceful. She smokes a lot and speaks very well, stylishly: 'He jabbed it!' She has a way with words. Her slang is at times of the regulars of the yellow press and the market, although she is a person of the most versatile education and mingles in a wide circle of writers, artists, and theatre people. She is writing a biography of Zinaida Volkonskaia and speaks with enthusiasm about the era of Pushkin and the aristocratic literature. She despises her job as a 'correspondent' and 'disgustedly' visits the editorial office once a month. She knows everyone and enjoys the good graces of the 'newest' and the 'new.' She is also called 'strange' and 'psychopathic' (as they used to call me). Many accurate remarks, sharpness of mind, and noble taste sparkled so much in all her speeches and stories" [14, p. 201–203].

Kallash's book about Zinaida Volkonskaia was published only in 1916, and for now, she was more occupied with the adaptation of Goncharov's *The Precipice*

for Khanzhonkov's company, which she invites Knipper-Chekhova to see in early September: "If you are free tomorrow, please give an hour of your time to view *The Precipice*. Unfortunately, very little time was spent on this work due to the haste caused by purely cinematic obligations, but there are still attempts not to distort the writer. I will bow the ground if you 'deign' [to visit the screening]. Your M. Kallash" [14, p. 228].

The Precipice was the first in a series of adaptations conceived by the Khanzhonkovs and Kallash, which would keep the author's text in the intertitles and would be filmed, whenever possible, in the places where the action took place. Press reports about the filming of the picture directed by Petr Chardynin indicated active participation of the screenwriter in it.

However, Knipper-Chekhova apparently ignored this invitation as well. The actress finally spoke about cinema in 1914, together with other actors of the Moscow Art Theatre, in an interview for the newspaper *Peterburgskii kur'er* (*The Petersburg Courier*): "No cinema, no matter how perfect, could ever replace theatre, because in the cinema you never experience aesthetic heightened moments that you experience in the theatre.

This is also true of the actor playing for the screen. Never will a true actor play in front of the camera with as much inspiration and feeling as they would play in front of the exciting sea of faces of the auditorium" [16, p. 30].

And yet, the Khanzhonkov company did not give up hope of associating its name with the name of the Moscow Art Theatre (and thus raising its own prestige and the prestige of cinema in general), and it was Maria Kallash who made the main efforts in this direction, as can be seen from the October issue of the company's magazine *Vestnik kinematografii*. Its cover featured a portrait of Stanislavsky (in connection with the 15th anniversary of the Theatre), and inside there was the text by Kallash herself under the heading "The Beacon of Art": "...at the moment that we are in, when a certain shallowness reigns and is being consciously cultivated in all fields of the art, while serious and profound creative work recedes more and more into the background, giving way to an entertaining element, and life itself turns into a cabaret, and cabaret becomes life – at such a time the Art Theatre should, to its credit, be considered not very up-to-date. It stands aside from the noisy carnival of our everyday life, alone in its intense and tireless pursuit, closed off in its devotion to art" [17, p. 11].

However, a little less than a month later, on November 16, 1913, Kallash announced her resignation from the position of head of the studio's Literary Department through the pages of the very same magazine:

"Dear Sir, Mr Editor!

In view of the fact that requests and proposals continue to come to me in connection with staging literary works for cinema, I consider it my duty to declare that I have resigned from the position of the head of the Literary Department in A. Khanzhonkov & Co joint-stock company.

Please accept my assurances etc.

M. Kallash-Garris.

A. Khanzhonkov & Co joint-stock company, notifying that M. A. Kallash-Garris has resigned from the post as the head of the Literary Department in connection with adaptations for the screen, asks to address scenarios to the Board of the company" [18, p. 17–18].

And yet, in February 1914, articles about cinema signed by Garris started to appear in *Vestnik kinematografii* again, and on May 3, 1914, a new letter was sent to O. Knipper-Chekhova:

"Moscow. May 3, 1914.

Dear Olga Leonardovna!

I don't know if you have received my letter, although it seems that I sent it by special delivery. On May 6 or 7, I will be in St. Petersburg, and from there, through Pskov, I am heading to Pushkin's places. Would you like to accompany me?

I both want and need to see you. There is no answer from Konst.<antin> Serg.<eevich>, I just don't know what to do!" [14, p. 228].

After the trip, on May 31, 1914, Kallash wrote to O. Knipper-Chekhova from Moscow to Kiev: "I am so tired of Moscow that I cannot sit still. Newspaper and magazine affairs have caused chaos and complete disgust for the inkwell in my head. I only hope that I will air my dusty brains a little, and then it will become easier.

Recently at the Iskra Theatre, I saw the cinematic *Anna Karenina* with Germanova in the head... What a horror, what types! Vronsky is a drunken regimental clerk, Stiva Oblonsky is portrayed by someone with the face of a footman from some Palermo [restaurant] in Pskov, the rest are to match, and Anna Karenina herself is no different from Vasilisa in *Lower Depths*. I had not expected anything good, but still, I could not have imagined such a mockery of Tolstoy. How could she take on such a role, how could she agree to perform with such actors! And she, an artist of the Art Theatre, was not at all shocked by the staging of the picture, which allowed such incongruities as a teddy bear and other ultra-modern toys that Anna Karenina brings to her son. It is scary to think that this celluloid *Anna Karenina* will pass in front of millions of viewers who are quite sure that they are being shown the real images of Tolstoy. It is horrible to think that literature has become the subject of indiscriminate cinema manufacturing and no one is protesting. While one could, if one wished, find a way to something real here as well, by putting certain artistic goals, and not trade at the forefront. Act in an adaptation of *In the Grip [of Life]*, Olga Leonardovna, preserve yourself "for ever." This is my dream. It will only be necessary to find serious filmmakers because the Khanzhonkovs are hardly capable of doing this either" [14, p. 229–30].

Judging by this letter, by the summer of 1914 Kallash had become disillusioned with the Khanzhonkovs – and it seems that her attacks on the company in 1915 are connected precisely with an even greater maximalism than that of Aleksandr Khanzhonkov himself regarding the ideal future of the new art form, and not at all with insincerity and hackwork at the very beginning of their cooperation,

as Petr Chardynin saw it (or as he presented for polemical purposes). But it was in 1914 that Kallash got the opportunity to finally bring together the actors of the Moscow Art Theatre and Khanzhonkov's company and to even become the director of the resulting film – because Olga Knipper finally answered to the invitation to go to Pushkin's places. Along with her came K. K. Alekseeva (Stanislavsky and Lilina's daughter), V. L. Mchedelov and N. O. Massalitinov. And this event was captured on film.

6. MARIA KALLASH, A FILM DIRECTOR? 1914

In the July 5, 1914 issue of *Vestnik kinematografii*, a new article by Garris was dedicated to the centenary of Pushkin's literary career (July 4, 1914 – counting from the publication of his poem “To a Poet Friend” in *Vestnik Evropy* (*The Herald of Europe*)) and linked the trip to this anniversary: “The photographic albums available until now gave only a faint idea of the places connected to Pushkin; photography, in general, cannot replace an immediate, live impression.

The company A. Khanzhonkov & Co filmed Pushkin's places.

In view of the upcoming anniversary, a trip was made to Mikhailovskoe, Trigorskoe, and Sviatye Gory, in which some artists of the Art Theatre took part, including O. L. Knipper-Chekhova, also joined by a cameraman of the company A. Khanzhonkov & Co, who filmed the Pushkin's places under special supervision. <...>

This fall will see the release of this picture, equipped, in the form of intertitles, with quotes from Pushkin's poems related to the places shown on the screen. Of interest for the broadest strata of the public, it will undoubtedly be included into the repertoire of school screenings and will serve as the beginning of the historical and literary film library, on the creation of which the most cultural layers of our filmmakers should work hard” [19, p. 14].

V. Timofeeva's diary again preserved the details of the visit: “At about 9 o'clock in the evening, when everyone had already gone to their rooms, two carts drove up to the gate, and I heard a familiar female voice: ‘They used to live somewhere here then, in this very wing... I remember, Varvara Vasilievna she lived somewhere around here.’ The voice was familiar, but I didn't recognize it. So I had to get dressed again and go out. At the gate, there was a whole train of ladies and men. ‘Varvara Vasil'evna, hello!’ – shouted, on seeing me, our last year's guest M. A. Kallash. – ‘Do you know who I brought to you? Olga Leonardovna Chekhova-Knipper and her colleagues from the Moscow Art Theatre. Give us shelter, as you sheltered me then!’ We exchanged greetings, and while the rooms were being prepared, I took them to the poet. We entered Pushkin's house. The white night looked at us through all the windows. Out of the closet, I took a volume of *The Library for Reading* of 1834 <...> and opened on page 12, sacred to me: “An Elegy. By A. Pushkin.” We lit a candle stub on the table, and everyone gathered around like over a grave dear to everyone. Massalitinov held the book opened

on this page and read without raising his voice, without the slightest tension, with an intonation of tender emotion, as simple-hearted people read prayers:

The senseless years' extinguished mirth and laughter...

A reverent silence hung in the air. Everyone's eyes were glued to the same page. One and the same 'wondrous excitement' seethed in everyone's chest. <...> 'What an amazing sight!' – I involuntarily exclaimed, – 'I regret that I can not capture all of you for eternity with either a photograph or a brush. But I can write this minute down. And I will'" [20, p. 12–13].

Kallash also described the trip in the magazine *Bayan* [*Old Bard*] that same year, but in her version "An Elegy" had been read Knipper: "Late in the evening, we are sitting in Pushkin's study. At dusk, the memorial house gives the illusion of antiquity. On the table, one candle is burning over an open notebook in a red morocco cover with the inscription 'The Village of Mikhailovskoe,' where visitors enter their names. <...> The light of the candle flickers faintly on the faces bent over the book; Pushkin's verse and the actress's beautiful voice alone fill our guarded souls <...> The last line of the poem ended. We are silent, no one moves" [21, p. 223–24].

A couple of days later, a man appeared in Mikhailovskoe who was capable of "capturing everyone for eternity." Timofeeva wrote down a little later: "The garden is all in bloom, pale pink, filled with aroma. Olga Leonardovna wanders dreamily alone under the fragrant shade, recalling *The Cherry Orchard* and her refined acting. Kira Konstantinovna sketches in her travel albums. Maria Aleksandrovna Kallash takes the 'cinema specialist' to the most interesting corners and places. Mchedelov lovingly scoops up some 'Pushkin's native soil' in a jar, and Massalitinov ponders what would be better to perform at Mikhailovskoe: *A Feast in Time of Plague* or *Mozart and Salieri*. Everyone dreams of coming here with the whole company" [20, p. 14].

There is no doubt that this trip and the invitation of the cameraman was Kallash's idea. Moreover, based on this information, we can add Maria Kallash to the list of the first Russian women filmmakers, along with Elizaveta Thiemann and Olga Preobrazhenskaia. In his filmography of pre-revolutionary documentaries, V. Vishnevskii talks about this filming with reference to Kallash's text in *Vestnik kinematografii*, calls the film by the title of her article – *Pushkin's Places*, but adds the name of the cameraman – M. I. Vladimirkii: "Footage (June?) <...> of a trip to the village of Mikhailovskoe, Trigorskoe and Sviatye Gory of the Moscow Art Theatre actors (O. Knipper-Chekhova and others)" [8, p. 229].

In 1923, after the departure of Maria Kallash from Soviet Russia, her description of the trip from the *Bayan* magazine was published in a separate, expanded edition called *Pushkin's Places*, with the following comment: "Along with photographs [printed in the book], I was able to, also in 1914, with the help of the Moscow-based cinematographic company of Khanzhonkov, which kindly responded to my proposal, to reproduce Pushkin's places, starting from the Novgorodka post station, on film. I supplied this film with titles from the texts of Pushkin,

Yazykov, etc., but, unfortunately, it apparently perished in 1918 during the requisitions of cinema companies and warehouses, because only one copy of it had been printed" [22, p. 8].

Less than a month after the article about Pushkin's anniversary, with the outbreak of the First World War, Kallash-Garris returned to journalistic work with renewed vigour and, in particular, took up coverage of the lives of women in the rear and their participation in the war effort [23]. It is likely that new resonant topics that appeared with the outbreak of the war (coinciding with the beginning of the new film season) became the reason that the film about the trip to Pushkin's places was never released.

But it was precisely the connection between cinema and military affairs that prompted her article in September 1915, to which Petr Chardynin reacted so strongly (he himself would soon leave the Khanzhonkov company lured by higher fees and greater responsibility at Dmitrii Kharitonov's firm). Kallash-Garris herself, as far as is known at the moment, never returned to working in cinema and even to film criticism. She is listed as the screenwriter of Chardynin's film *Shadows of Sin*, released in 1915 (the same "adaptation of Amfiteatrov's novel *Poisoned Conscience*", of which he accuses her), but, most likely, this screenplay was written earlier, during the period of Kallash's active work at Khanzhonkov's studio. In January 1918 her husband died, in 1922 she left Soviet Russia, in exile in Paris she was engaged in literary research and published numerous works on the philosophy of Orthodoxy. In 1934, under the pseudonym M. Kurdiunov, she published the book *Confused Heart: On the Work of Chekhov, 1904–34*.

Maria Kallash-Garris' short love affair with cinema and such diverging views of this affair which appear in Chardynin's invectives and her own documents are characteristic of both the contradictions of the film industry at that time – and of the description of these contradictions in subsequent memoirs and historical works. Who were the first Russian filmmakers: speculators, hackers, and opportunists, or people who were in love with new entertainment form and tried with all their might to elevate it to the status of art? Can commercial considerations be separated from educational ones in their work? What is cinema, after all: a cultural and social phenomenon or an industry? And does one need to choose one or the other?

Kallash-Garris' husband, Vladimir Kallash, editor of many collections on the history of the Russian state, Russian literature, and theatre, wrote in one of them, *The Year 1812 in Memoirs and Correspondence of Contemporaries* (1912): "The life that has passed on into the 'darkness of the ages' has two enemies: the legends of the closest descendants and the historical analysis of later researchers. The former envelop the motley and vivid canvas of a living event in the fog of idealization and generalize the real into the ghostly; the second cut the living tissue and create a dead specimen from an animated cell.

But the beating of an eternally dying and eternally reborn life leaves its indelible traces – in the correspondence and close to the events memoirs of contemporaries, participants, creators of the historical moment.

Through the layers of contradictions and subjective colouring, the light of life's truth always, through cross-examination, breaks through in them" [24, p. 5].

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